

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

4th October 2006

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director/ Head of Planning Services

S/1642/06/F - FEN DRAYTON

Erection of Reception/Office Building and Polytunnel (Amended Design) for Bannold.

Recommendation: Approval

Date for determination: 5th October 2006

Departure from the Development Plan

Site and Proposal

1. The site comprises 2.3 hectares land in the rural area to the south-west of Fen Drayton, close to the slipway to the A14 eastbound. The land was formerly in use as a nursery, having a large single-storey agricultural building a number of glasshouses in poor condition. There are several storage bins with soils, sand and gravel, together with disused plant, equipment and vehicles on the site. A crop of Norwegian Spruce grows at the south eastern end of the site.
2. Access to the site is from Mill Road. The northwest boundary of the site adjoins the rear garden areas of a pair of dwellings, Nos 1 and 2 Mill Road. To the north east of the site, there are more nurseries. To the south west, the site is bounded by Huntingdon Road, where there is a mature hedgerow boundary. To the south east, the site adjoins a warehouse unit in use by Cambridge Produce Brokers.
3. This full application, dated 27th July 2006, proposes revised details for two buildings previously approved under planning permission S/1642/06/F. The office/reception building is amended to be a reclaimed oak-framed barn of aisled construction, known as Whidleys barn. This is a tall building – 9.5m to ridge – but single-storey with a small mezzanine level. It is to be clad in weatherboard and Tudor facing bricks, with a reclaimed pantile roof. The ground floor area of 220 sq m is similar to that previously approved. The proposed polyhouse is a single structure of approximately the same dimensions as the three greenhouses previously approved, and in the same location.

Planning History

4. Planning permission was granted on this site on 15th February 2006 with this description: 'Expansion of existing nursery facilities to retain tree plantation, provide 3 greenhouses, together with a change of use for 11 showgardens, area for storage and supply of hard and soft landscaping materials; erection of a reception/office building; retention of existing barn for ancillary storage and staff facilities; car parking and construction of a vehicular access to Huntingdon Road'. (S/2192/05/F).

Planning Policy

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003

5. **P1/1** (Approach to Development)- development should be located where travel distances by car can be minimised, walking and cycling encouraged and where good transport accessibility exists or can be provided.
6. **P1/2** (Environmental Restrictions on Development)- development will be restricted in the countryside unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
7. **P2/5** (Distribution, Warehousing and Manufacturing) – these uses will only be permitted on sites with good access to rail freight facilities, and to motorways, trunk or other primary routes.
8. **P2/6** (Rural Economy) – sensitive small-scale development in rural areas will be facilitated where it contributes, inter *alia*, to supporting new and existing businesses; to farm or rural diversification where appropriate to the rural area; to the re-use of existing buildings; towards helping to maintain or renew the vitality of rural areas.
9. **P8/1** (Sustainable Transport – Links between Land Use and Transport) – LPA's should ensure that new development provides appropriate access from the highway network that does not compromise safety.

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004

10. **EM10** (Conversion of Rural Buildings and Future Extensions) – outside village frameworks planning permission will be granted for the change of use and conversion of rural buildings to employment use subject to a number of provisions including:
 - (a) The buildings do not require major reconstruction;
 - (b) The conversion will not prejudice village vitality;
 - (c) The appearance after conversion is in keeping with the surroundings;
 - (d) The conversion does not materially change the material character of the building or the surrounding countryside;
 - (e) Safe access and satisfactory provision for parking and turning of vehicles can be achieved without detriment to the setting of the building or the surrounding landscape;
 - (f) Scale and frequency of traffic generated can be accommodated on the road system without undue effects.
11. **Paragraph 5.49** states: "Because most rural buildings in South Cambridgeshire are small the potential scale of activity of converted buildings will usually be similarly modest. Any elements of increased floorspace contained within conversion proposals will be strictly controlled and usually limited to that which may be necessary to achieve an enhanced design or integrate the scheme with its surroundings".
12. **Policy SH10** (Farm Shops and Nurseries) Sales from farms and nurseries of produce and/or craft goods will be permitted, subject to other policies in the Plan, provided they:
 - (a) Only sell goods of which the majority must be produced on the farm or in the locality;
 - (b) Do not generate a traffic problem;

- (c) Do not create a nuisance or create a visual intrusion;
 - (d) Do not adversely affect the setting or character of existing development.
13. The supporting text indicates “ The District Council is concerned about sporadic development in the open countryside but is aware of the special cases of nurseries and farm shops which can assist the viability of existing enterprises. Whilst nurseries and farmers may sell goods produced in the holding, there has been a trend for such outlets to include a wider range of goods including goods which are not produced locally. Operating with lower overheads, these sales could have adverse effect on the economic viability of existing shopping facilities in nearby villages. Nursery and farm sales should therefore be restricted to those goods which are primarily produced at the site.”
14. **Policy SH12** (Garden Centres): Garden centres will not be permitted unless they conform to the following criteria:
- (a) Convenience sales will not be permitted where it would have a significant adverse impact, either individually or cumulatively, on the viability and vitality of the existing the Rural and Limited Rural Growth Settlements in South Cambridgeshire, or other village centres;
 - (b) Not be located within the countryside or in such a location that the visual amenities of the countryside would be adversely affected;
 - (c) Be well related in scale and character to the settlement or surrounding development;
 - (d) Be conveniently located and well related to the primary road network and accessible by public transport, cyclists and pedestrians;
 - (e) Not create local traffic difficulties;
 - (f) Not prejudice the residential environment; and
 - (g) Not conflict with other policies and proposals in the Structure and Local Plans.
15. The supporting text states,” Garden centres are different from nurseries because the retail activity undertaken is not ancillary to the growing of stock on the site. Therefore, whilst they can be large users of land, garden centres do not need to be located in the countryside. A garden centre is wholly a retail activity and can be accommodated on retail warehouse parks or on the edge of existing urban areas. However, like petrol filling stations and farm shops, they can benefit from lower overheads and should not be permitted to sell convenience or other goods where it could undermine the viability of village shops which are better located to serve the entire population, not just those with ready access to motor car.”
16. **Policy EN3** (Landscaping and Design Standards for New Development in the Countryside) – new development in the countryside should reinforce local distinctiveness in terms of scale, design, layout, materials and landscaping.
17. **Policy Fen Drayton 1:** Within the area of the former Land Settlement Association Estate, planning permission will not be granted for housing or commercial development unless it is directly related to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area. The supporting text indicates that the former estate is the subject of a 1937 Planning Agreement which restricts the use of land, buildings and dwellings to those of agriculture and horticulture.

Consultations

18. **Fen Drayton Parish Council** – no objection to the development.

19. **Highways Agency** – The Highways Agency has reiterated its requirement that a travel plan should be provided to support the proposal.
20. **Environment Agency** – the Environment Agency has restated its recommendations for two conditions and informatives as for the previous planning approval.

Representations

21. Representations have been received from the present occupier of the site, and the occupier of the adjacent dwelling at 2, Mill Road, to confirm no objections to the proposal.

Planning Comments

22. The revised design to these two buildings do not raise any issue of principle. The appearance of the site will not be significantly affected, and there will be adverse impact on neighbouring amenity or the appearance of the countryside. The approved uses on the site will be unchanged.
23. The previous application was referred to the Secretary of State as a departure from the development plan, but was not called in for determination by her. In these circumstances I deem it unnecessary to refer the current application to her.

Recommendation

24. Approval of the application, dated 27th July 2006, subject to the following conditions:
 1. Standard Condition A – Time limited permission (Reason A);
 2. All conditions and informatives attached to planning permission reference S/2192/05/F in respect of the site as a whole. (Reason - In the interests of the proper planning of the area).

Informatives

1. The development is considered generally to accord the following policies in the Development Plan:
 - **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003: P2/6** (Rural Economy)
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004: P2/5** (Distribution, Warehousing and Manufacturing); **EN3** (Landscaping and Design Standards for New Development in the Countryside)
2. The development is considered to be acceptable as an exception to other policies in the Development Plan, notably **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 P1/2** (Environmental Restrictions on Development), and **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 EM10** (Conversion of Rural Buildings and Future Extensions), **Policy SH10** (Farm Shops and Nurseries), **Policy SH12** (Garden Centres) and **Fen Drayton 1** because of the limited visual intrusion into the countryside, the proximity to the A14 which will afford safe vehicular access with minimal use of the rural road network, the retention of a significant element of a horticultural use, and the limited impact on the viability and vitality of village centres in South Cambridgeshire.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning file Ref. S/1642/06/F, S/2192/05/F.

Contact Officer: Ray McMurray – Senior Planning Assistant
Telephone: (01954) 713259